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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9752
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2124
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0853
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 1035
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2819
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1165
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4747
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1866
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0142
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 002692

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2027

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: CUBA COUNTRY REVIEW FOR LIBERTAD ACT: DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

REF: A. STATE 158768

[1](#)B. SANTO DOMINGO 01205

[1](#)C. 06 SANTO DOMINGO 3283

[1](#)D. 06 SANTO DOMINGO 2720

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Roland W. Bullen, Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In response to Ref A request, Embassy finds here has been no marked change in the Dominican Republic's situation with regard to Cuba since our last report (ref B). The Dominican Republic has very few investments in Cuba. No bilateral trade agreement exists between the Dominican Republic and Cuba. According to our contacts, official programs exist that allow Dominicans to earn medical degrees in Cuba. Some Cuban doctors visit the Dominican Republic and provide assistance at underserved hospitals, but not under an exchange program. Other interactions involve educational, sports, and technical exchanges. In the public fora, the Dominican Republic remains relatively quiet regarding Cuban affairs. President Fernandez visited Cuba in 2006 to attend the Non-Aligned Nations Summit. Former Ambassador Hertell and Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso visited the detention facilities at Guantanamo base in 2006 (ref C). Embassy considers that U.S. national interests and Dominican government actions justify continued renewal of the suspension of Title III of the Libertad Act with regard to Dominican businesses. End Summary.

Dominican Businesses and Cuba

[1](#)2. (C) According to Embassy sources, there are very few Dominican investments in Cuba. Our sources state that legitimate businesses fear doing business with Cuba due to the political climate between the United States and Cuba. However, there are small Dominican companies that conduct business with Cuba. One company in particular is Jupasa, S.A., which imports beauty and health products from Cuba and sells those products in Santo Domingo.

[1](#)3. (C) From a historical perspective, Dominican company Cartonajes Hernandez (W.I.) S.A. exported 1.7 million kilograms of waste paper to Cuban company Cubapel and Union del Papel (the Cuban government agency responsible for the

paper industry) in late 2001. In 2002, Cartonajes received 600 tons of medium from Cubapel in early 2002.

¶4. (SBU) The Dominican Republic does not have a bilateral trade agreement with Cuba. On May 2, 2007, the Dominican Secretary of Economy, Planning, and Development, Temistocles

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Montas, offered to negotiate a free-trade agreement with Cuba. The Embassy evaluates this offer as mere rhetoric designed to please Cuban guests at a bilateral meeting (see para. 7). The Dominicans also offered a free-trade agreement during the first Fernandez Administration, 1996-2000, and nothing came of it. On June 9, a small group of Cuban businesspeople visited the Dominican Republic as part of the "First Cuban-Dominican Commercial Mission," which focused on the pharmaceutical and hospital industries.

Cuban-Dominican Technical Cooperation and Exchanges

¶5. (C) On June 4, Miguel Mejia, Dominican Minister Without Portfolio, visited Cuba at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. The visit did not generate much interest here and received little press coverage. (Note: Mejia, Secretary-General of the Movement of the United Left party, is the member of President Fernandez's ideologically broad coalition that is often tapped to maintain dialogue with leftist regimes such as Cuba and Venezuela.)

¶6. (SBU) The Dominican Republic has formal interactions with Cuba in the areas of medicine, education, sports, and industrial property. Under a formal agreement between the Dominican Republic and Cuba, Dominican medical professionals are permitted to attend 6 years of medical school in Cuba.

Graduates of the program receive a degree as a general practitioner. In a comment to the press on July 9, the Cuban Charge claimed that there were 500 Dominicans studying in Cuba. Cuban doctors come to the Dominican Republic to provide medical services at some local underserved hospitals, but not in a quid-pro-quo fashion.

¶7. (SBU) On May 2-3 2007, the Dominican and Cuba governments held the "7th Mixed Commission for Cooperation" meeting in Santo Domingo. Included on the agenda were the discussion of health, education, agriculture, sports, and technology. The Dominicans were represented at the ministerial level and the Cubans at the vice-ministerial level. The meeting received limited attention from the Dominican public and media.

¶8. (C) In private conversations, a Dominican patent employee told EMBOFF that he and another Dominican patent employee received three months of formal training from the Cuban industrial property authority in Cuba in early 2006.

¶9. (SBU) Cuban cultural advisors as well as Cuban sports technicians and trainers visit the Dominican Republic on a frequent basis.

Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Cuba

¶10. (C) According to Embassy sources, the Dominican Republic has not publicly promoted the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba. Ambassador Danilo Clime, the Dominican foreign ministry official in charge of Caribbean Affairs and a noted sociologist, responded privately with interest to our inquiries about promoting democracy in Cuba, though he thought that our methodology was flawed (ref D). Clime added that the program, "A Compact with the Cuban people," can easily be misinterpreted as imperialism and therefore plays directly into the hands of Castro hard-liners and other reactionary hard-liners in the region, e.g. Chavez. As in previous years, the Dominican Republic recently joined the overwhelming majority of nations that approved a UNGA resolution to end the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba.

¶11. (SBU) In 2006, President Fernandez visited Havana to attend the Non-Aligned Nations summit. His remarks did not promote the advancement of democracy in Cuba. Fernandez focused on immigration issues as well as defending Petrocaribe.

¶12. (C) In general, Fernandez supports the advancement of democracy in the region. For example, in 2006 the Dominicans voted for Guatemala in its race against Venezuela for a seat on the U.N. Security Council.

¶13. (C) On September 28, 2006 former Ambassador Hertell and Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso visited the detention facilities at Guantanamo, Cuba. Both came away impressed by the organization, the punctilious respect for human rights of detainees, and the sense of mission of the U.S. military personnel under the direction of Commander JTF-GTMO Rear Admiral Harris (Ref C). The Foreign Minister expressed the hope that other senior officials in the hemisphere might make the same trip to learn the situation first-hand. Shortly after returning Morales Troncoso briefed Dominican President Leonel Fernandez about his findings.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) There is very little Dominican investment in Cuba, and Embassy has no information about any current conflict between Dominican investors and U.S. citizens with property claims in Cuba. If the suspension of Title III were not renewed and a U.S. citizen were to bring suit against an entity under Title III, its extraterritorial reach could affect the possibility of obtaining future Dominican support for diplomatic initiatives on behalf of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

¶15. (C) Regarding the Dominican view on a "free and democratic" Cuba, our analysis suggests that the Dominican Republic prefers Cuba "as is" in order to protect the Dominican tourism industry. The tourism industry provides 12 percent of Dominican GDP. If Cuba were allowed to open its doors to American tourism, Dominican tourism would suffer tremendously. In the last few years, the Dominican Republic and private entities have invested millions of dollars in the tourism industry and at the present time these investments have paid off.

¶16. (SBU) The Dominican Republic also does not want to jeopardize its Petrocaribe deal, knowing that Presidents Chavez and Castro are close allies.

(U) This report and additional information can be found on Embassy Santo Domingo's SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
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